

RELATIVELY
DARK BLUE
NEITHER
PURPLE
NOR
GREEN

RADIO

WYBC YALE RADIO

RELATIVELY DARK BLUE NEITHER PURPLE NOR GREEN 31: The Death Issue

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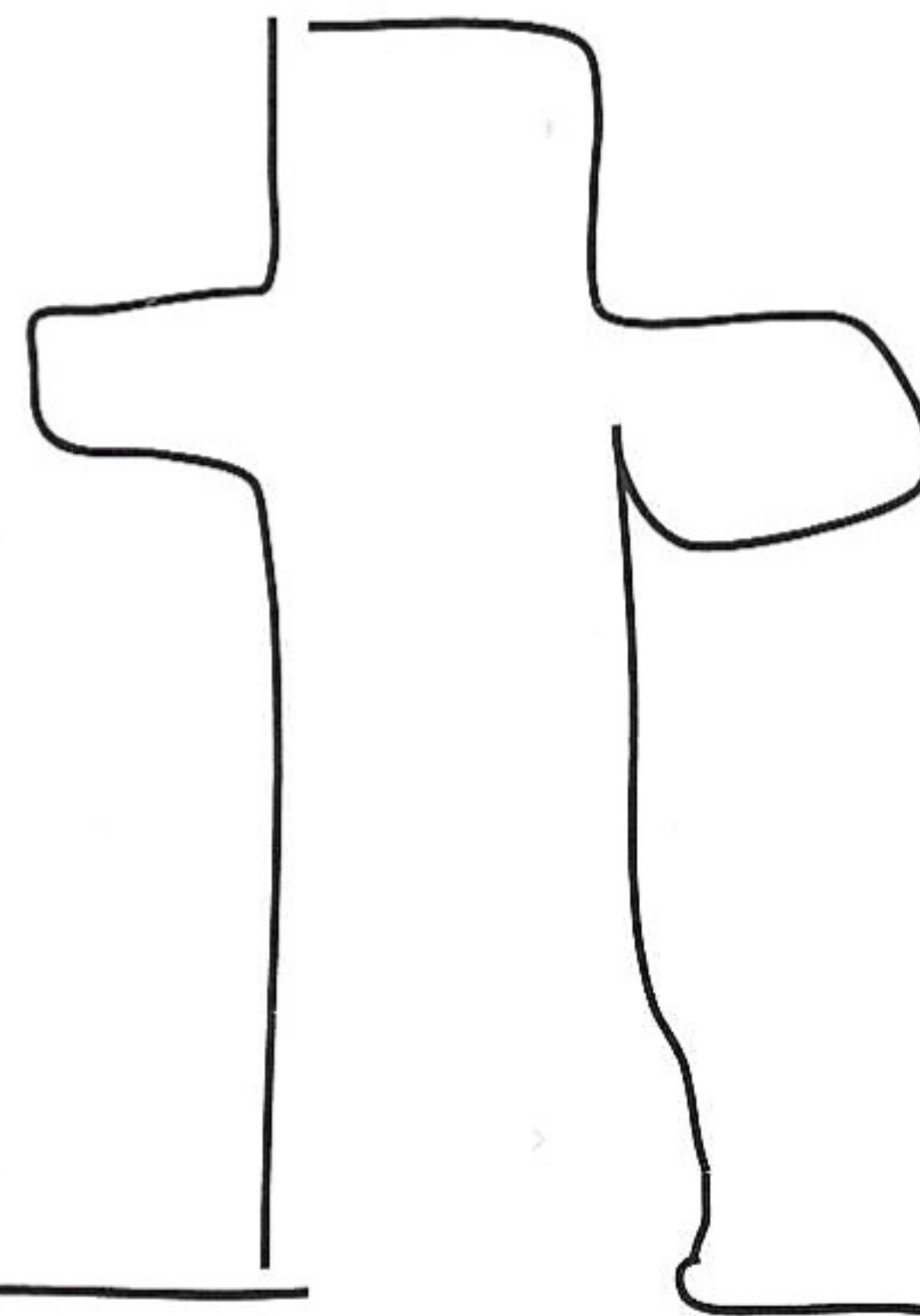
Iowan Old Style

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TABLE OF CONTENTS:

CARAMIA PUTMAN	01
Mom Spelt Backwards... , The Franklin Library...	
NATALIA VALADZKO	02
Blossom	
JACK ADAM	05
Goth: Alternative Hip	
CAROLINE MAGAVERN	06
YULIYA CHARNYSHOVA	07
Depression	
ARIZONA GREENE & PETER DAY	09
Dead Libs	
PETER NEKRASOV	11
Neighbors	
ALICE OH	13
Vamos pa' la playa	
BRITTANY MENJIVAR	17
Everybody Talks About Death	
LAURIE ROARK	19
Elegy for Bell	

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Jack Adam, Caramia Putman



LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

Why Death?

This issue is a kind of vanitas still life, a reminder that this bustling busy living might end in a rather unexpected manner.

The choice lies between short and ugly or long and ugly, otherwise it appears rather inevitable. Perhaps some of us may be hit by a vehicle while holding a go-to Durfee's swipe? Or maybe a few are a little too careless while walking between subway trains? Or, say, ocean water in Puerto Rico may give us a sense it can engulf us? A range of options, a list, letters on the page thrown together. Yet, what is it so harrowing about thinking of each of them in terms of one's own life?

It may be the understanding of the fragility of the proper body, which appears as a constraint for the existence of mind. A sort of a dualistic impression of self. The body gives us clues that we need to accept our mind's dependence on it. Why are we so afraid of Alzheimer's? Is depression just a disarrangement of hormones or is it a signal of something the mind cannot comprehend? Too often we are confronted with the fact that no matter how highly we think of ourselves, the body can go out of control and all we can do is to accept it and carry on.

When we're facing the death of loved ones, pain and heartbreak seem to be unprecedented. Yet, with time, they appear as threads that connect all the ones alive. We discover this by talking, letting grief flow out with our words, writing about it, allowing it to slip between pencil strokes or between texts. We discover this by listening to what others have to say, catching their words, looking at their art, and being there for them in the moments of need.

Radio is dead,
long live radio

Aliaksandra

Mom Spelt Backwards is Mom Give her a Call Caramia Putman

Someone said in photograph he looked like a bird caught mid-flight. Maybe a pin; black and thin. A lover rushing to embrace with the ground. An infant flailing coming out of the womb coming out of the bathtub coming into light. A dark icicle threatening to impale the icy street. To me he looked how watercolor drips. Bumpy lines of fluid begging to find the lowest point, and when found, running into invisible paper veins like blood.

Someone told me if the Earth was the size of a pool ball it would be the smoothest pool ball. But there are still fault lines. There are still things that look like mountains. Inside and out. Someone also told me there's a new suicide net in San Francisco. When people jump off the Golden Gate it saves them, but the holes in between rope are large. Large enough to break limbs or a rib so people can't get away.

In the sun windows look like mirrors. There's a bank with windows that reflect everything with a tinge of gold. When standing at the top of the hiking trail the bank is blinding, especially at sunset. Today the sun was setting. That was how I saw him.

Someone told me when I was a kid to wish on the first star I see at night if I see the first one. If the stars were black dots and the night was gold he would be that for me. I wish there were spikes under every window in that bank. Isn't that a horrible thing to wish?

Everything is backwards today.

The Franklin Library has no Books in it Should That Make me Mad?

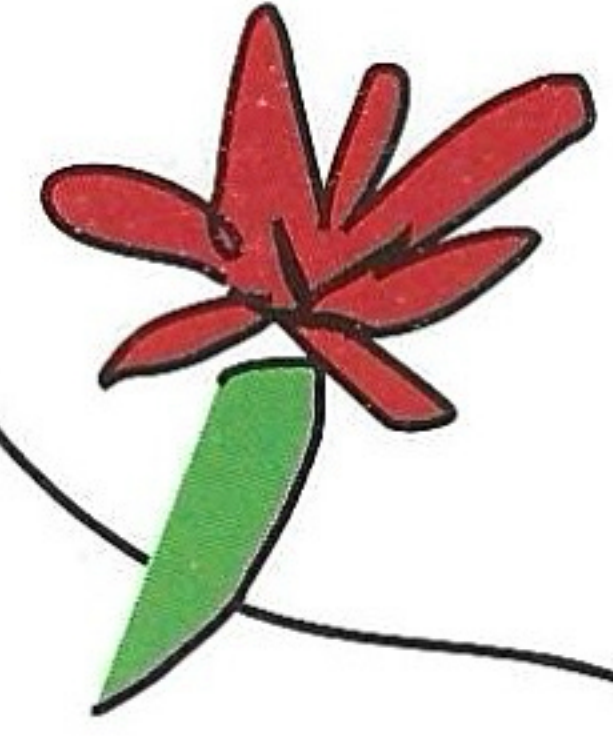
"Seven people have *died* walking between Subway trains in 2018. Don't take the risk."

He could see into the train windows as they passed. In the tunnels he shoved his chest in, imagining he was a sheet of paper, the wind forcing him steadily to the wall. He noticed a young girl sleeping inside the car, acrylic-nailed hands resting softly on her orange bag. Over her was the sign. Maybe the warning was a sign from God, but surely he would not be the eighth. Surely he would not be.

He could peruse the in-betweens with his eyes closed, with acute balance. It was a form of meditation really. Much like meditation, he tried not to let anything fill his mind. Not the statistics, nor the wind. It was the corner of the city's mind that seemed to be meditating too. It was the place void of snippets of flyers, billboards, conversations, varied scents and sneakers. He pursued its skeleton. He reached underneath its streets, its clothes. And underneath he found people trying to float back up. People he couldn't hear. A machine pumping people from one place to another was all it really was. A circuit board like our brain is for thoughts, sensations, the nervous system.

BLOSSOM

Natalia Valadzko



I was walking past a grim exhibition only I
was invited to. The urban setting dulls the senses.
Brushing against the glass heads of stationary titans,
the sight doesn't go higher than their knees,

carefully steering among the breathing moving targets.
Don't look too closely nor too long. Long are the strides
one takes to cross, to overcome. Put in the headphones
and move across the realm, where your mission is not to

stop or look around, question; to dash, to trot, to trudge
through all of it. It was a pigeon.

On the crossing, its body was reaching towards the patches
of the sky, unobstructed. The wings were clinging to the

torso, stiff. The poppy blooming on its chest seemed morbid. How
I wished it to be a poppy sticking out of his jacket pocket. Maybe
then the violent crow, instead, would try to mug you, were you
alive, were you in that navy blue jacket with a poppy in the pocket.

But I saw a mighty coal-black crow brutally hitting it with its beak,
and another idly standing by. Like a predator, it moved to surround.
(Like darkness surrounds you and me) A step to the side, a wing to the air,
a solid smack — the still body moved an inch. An inch. An inch. An inch.

As if by pinching, they drag it off the road, out of danger, out of the spotlight.
Were you preying or saving dignity? Were you testing the flesh long gone or
showing solidarity? Were you dark hungry souls or tired of standing still?
Who was the culprit, the ultimate evildoer? Who is to blame?

The pigeon, reckless, or sick, or unlucky; the vicious crows, angry
and the last at the lonely funeral; the wheels that touched the pigeon
last; the car that does not know how to caress but rushes, rushes;
the driver that does not look, nor does he see, and rushes, rushes;

the rain that made him late; the job that pays only so much; the rent
that almost steals it all; the narrow roads; unpopularity of public
transportation; urban migration; a gust of wind; the inventors of
the automobile, the engine, the wheel. Will we ever grow dead tired

of seeing deadly blossom? Will we ever stop raging against the dying
of the light? I was walking past a grim exhibition only I was invited to.
The title was death, but the label did not elaborate further.

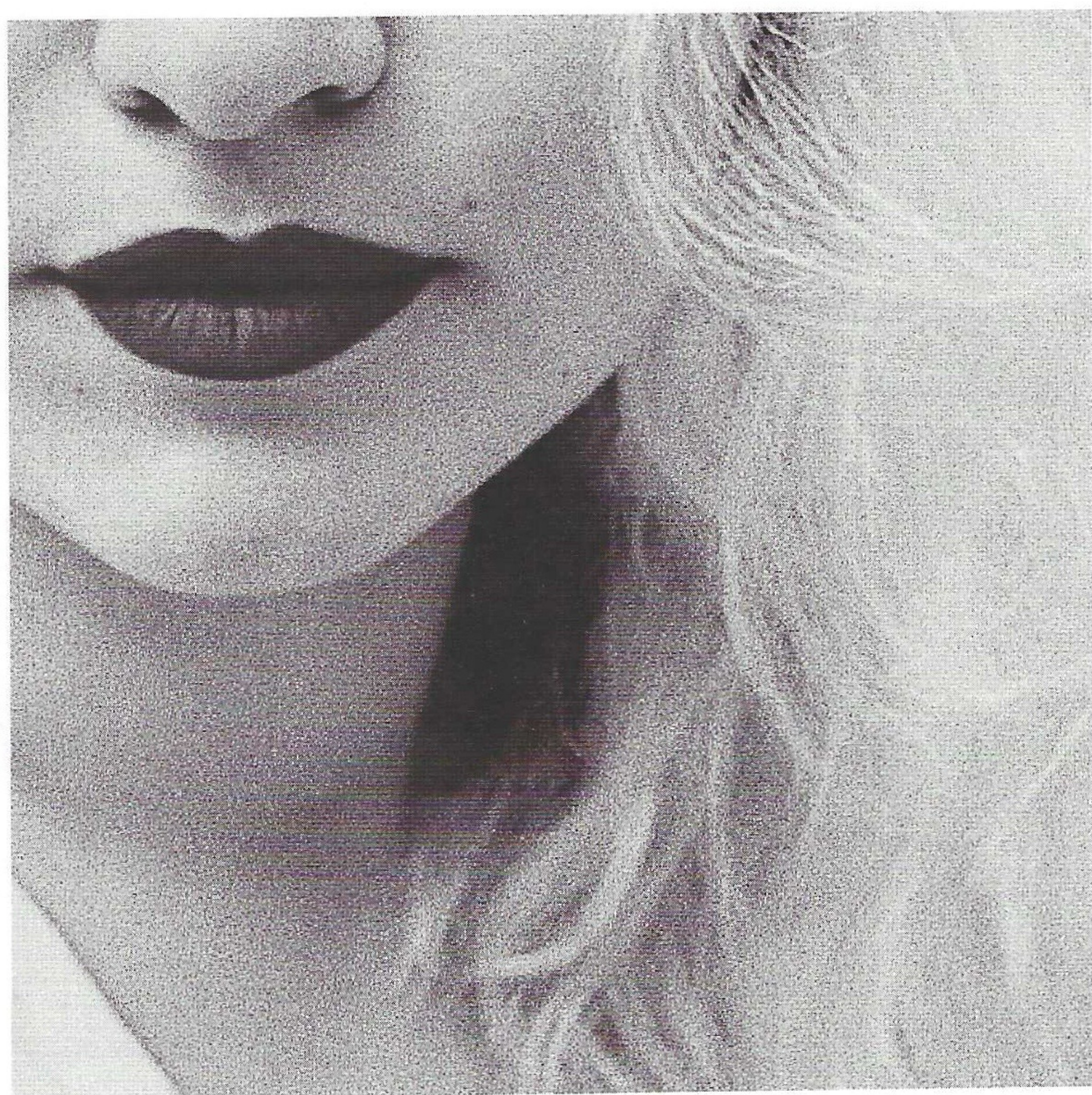
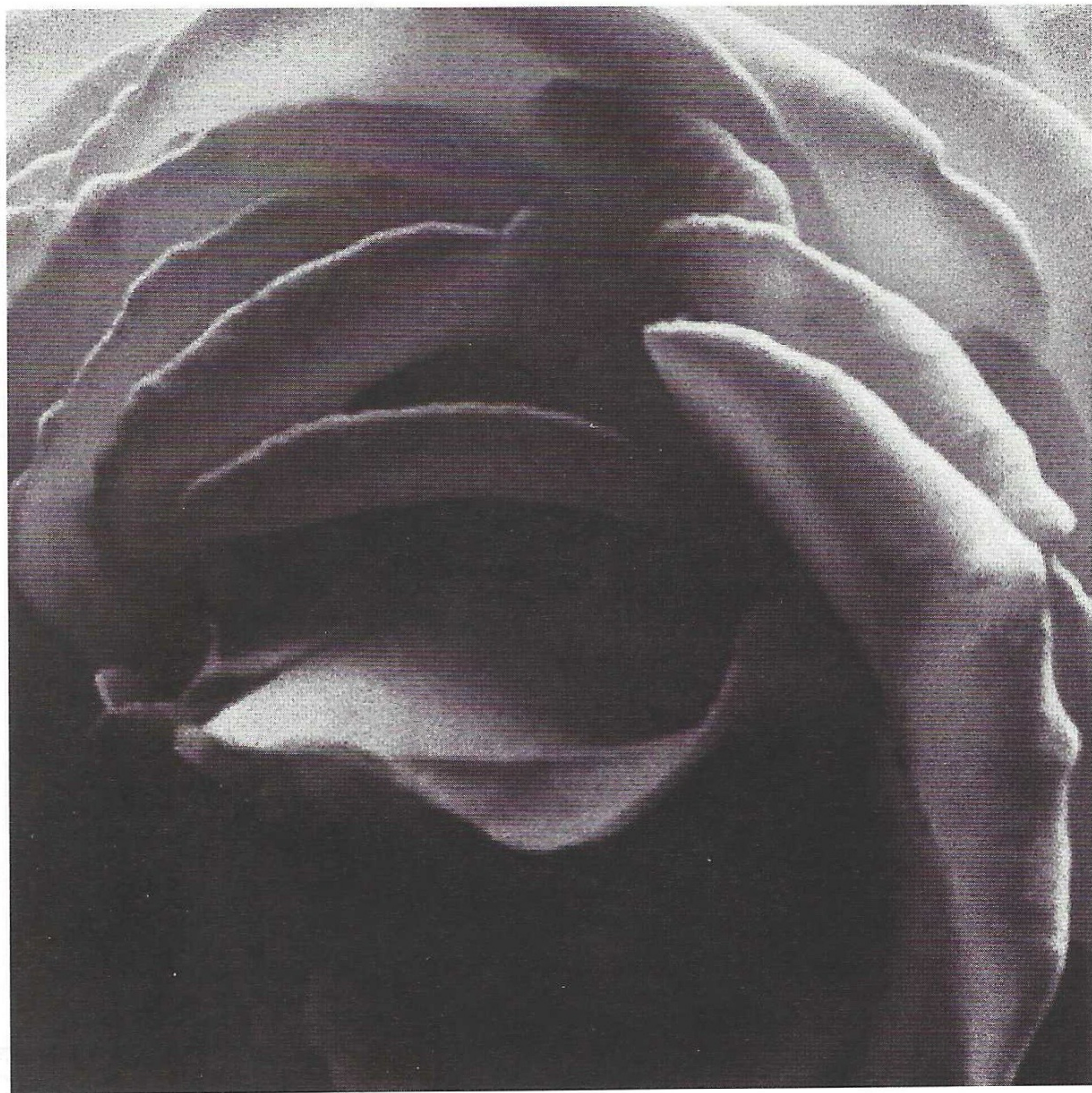
Anya Pertel



Kiddest Sinke

femme mortale

Aliaksandra Tucha



GOTH: ALTERNATIVE HIP

Jack Adam

III. Goth as Performer

To perform, I believe, is to exist in a higher space of consciousness. Performance requires a desire to subvert a state in which people think of “themselves in terms of their duties as workers and consumers.”¹ Aided by this hyper-awareness, one can begin to transcend the barriers to this new consciousness, which Thomas Frank calls “Consciousness III.”² It can be reached only if people “pursue their own liberation from the imposed values of the ‘corporate state.’”³ The Goth subculture inherently understands this power struggle as it sees the “entire outside world, life itself, as a common enemy.”⁴ This struggle is the foundation of Goth’s existence as a “transgressive” group which is “fascinated by the feelings and actions that [misery and drama] can bring.”⁵ By tapping into the dark parts of the ego and the realm of life that is most widely feared, the Goths exhibit their comfort with the uncanny and thus a sense of pride emerges.

The performance, then, can be found in the showy nature of their appearance: the adopted crucifix imagery, often multiplied to an extreme; flowery lace; medieval imagery; and a limited color palette dominated by black. There is also a certain industrial quality which is pervasive among Goth fashion. Goth style adopts an aesthetic of labor with tenets such as cargo pants, respirators, all things leather and latex, and long chains attached to belt loops. Similarly, the Goth style of dancing is often referred to as “industrial dancing,” which seems unsurprising given the “[c]onvulsive movements” that are performed so that the body becomes a machine: devoid of any visible emotion, yet caught in states of being “[a]lternately limp and rigidly erect.”⁶ This style, combined with a non-natural color palette, rejection of “typical” instruments, and primal screams, has formed a cohesive and shocking imagery that is central to the creation of identity.

Other specific behaviors are even more patently performative. Consider, though anecdotal, a young woman dancing with her reflection in a mirror on the edge of the dance floor at Partner’s Cafe during “Night: Darkwave – EDM – Industrial.” She appeared to be completely uninhibited in her flowing movements, unbothered by the dancing couples and groups scattered across the fog-filled floor and the occasional free agent bouncing among them. She was, at once, performing for no one and performing for the entire room—by setting herself in opposition to the “typical” manner of dance adopted by the rest of the crowd, she isolated herself and built a stage beneath her chunky black boots. Her seeming disregard for any spectators was perhaps hypocritically performative, yet deeply unpretentious, for there is always someone who will watch regardless of one’s body language.

On that note, Goth is also known for its deconstruction of the body through experimentation with sex and gender. Simply put, much of Goth dress—both traditional and New Wave—is heavily androgynous, consisting of clothes that are either baggy enough to hide traditionally sex-revealing features, or form-fitting so that they minimize these same features. Makeup is proudly worn by any and all participants, hairstyles know no bounds, and dance moves are generally not gendered.⁷ There are, however, heavily gendered motifs and ideologies adopted from BDSM which often appear in Goth contexts, ranging from restrictive leashes and collars to submissive/dominant or master/slave relationships (I find this particular language to be a bit insensitive, but alas). Of course, this is neither uncommon nor surprising: subcultures often borrow semiotics and codes as they evolve to incorporate more diverse populations.

¹ Frank, *The Conquest of Cool*, 14.

² Ibid.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Young, “Dancing On Bela Lugosi’s Grave,” 81.

⁵ Ibid., 78.

⁶ Ibid., 82.

⁷ Young, “Dancing on Bela Lugosi’s Grave,” 84.

**Caroline
Magavern**

**David Bowie (to be
played at maximum volume)**

I saw you behind me as I looked in the mirror,
Realizing that I could hurt people and trying
to find a pattern in the wind that pressed me
down into the mattress and scattered me among the glitter.
Thank you for helping me put orange and blue against each other
so that I could watch the line wobble.
Thank you, uncharted tears and consequence. Thank you,
you grotesque velvet, you exoplanet, you unblended
eye shadow. I hope you catch me on your view screen.

Lou Reed

I think I really fell in love when I was waking up
from dreams of the Chelsea Hotel and reckoning with March.
Lou, I want to write you a letter. I don't think you'd want to read it.
To someone who's been all the badness, all the goodness.
The sea mimicking that undecided heartbeat. I think you'd
understand. I imagine that August night at Max's was magical.
I'm trying to fill in the blanks here. I'm trying to study
your voices and make friends with everyone. We were
born under the same star. I hope you understand.

Leonard Cohen

You left when my grandmother began to hear again.
Every sound buzzing and looking for a head to settle in,
I would put my faith in you, ugly God.
My voice in her dead ear for the first time, I hope
She didn't turn on the TV that day. I hope she was peeling
Satsumas in her kitchen. Muttering prayer, words for you
To swallow. I've been to your birthplace,
And I took it as my own. You know when I will die.
Carve it in stone and leave it for the robins.

Alex Chilton

Sixteen-year-old morning in a graveyard,
The favorite of the musicians but not of the people,
My old friend. Tried to teach myself Thirteen
but he could play it easily. Sat next to me in study hall.
Gave me a guitar pick. Gave me
his empty pack of Reds to collage. I don't know
much, but I know some things. It feels like returning
to the Midwest after living on the cusp, grasping for
Okoboji and Minnehaha, lining up the disposable with
the real cherry and spoon. It feels like an old soul
trapped in young punks dancing at the Music Box in Omaha.
It feels like the alien voice of an unknown generation
turning on the light and sitting on the porch swing.

DEPRESSION

Yuliya Charnyshova

no magic
but a simple breakdown of your hormone system
when your cracking edges
come to an emergency switch
or a glitch

and when once a year it gives you freedom
to breathe
you'd better not oversleep
that day

there is a countdown for all of your good days or
maybe hours – you'd better not check –
in case it gives you no more than a sec
to feel life for the very first time
to feel the wind in your hair
before cutting it
and to feel someone's hand in yours before
cutting it

there is a second, a minute, a month,
I still feel, and I tell myself, "this must be real",
cause I'm sick of hands-holding with ghosts
and their faint kisses do nothing but harm
when they take me to lunch.
I'm not soft – I'm repeatedly punched,
and those phantoms of love haunt me to the grave.
I'm not brave. I'm numb, so I don't feel fear and a bunch
of other things.

till I realize,
the clock has been ticking all the damn way.
there's a countdown till I look at you and see through your fading away.

and then I wake up in that cage once again,
on all of the photos there's only I
with my demons, the only ones who ever held
me, and my memory resets to the default.

*

what a hateful device my head ought to be
to demolish me year after year,

and how many heartbreaks it takes
to stop ever trying.

cause the army of ghosts in my head won't ever go
or let me go to sleep, screaming they love me – no lying,
even if half of the time I am ugly crying and wincing,
while my wrists tell that the concept future is too unconvincing
to take anyone down with me through the pain.
sorry, darling this is just lame.

I wrote you one hundred letters or more, just a bit.
they were so tear-stained
that you were unable to read.

so we shall bid farewell
at the bus station
or at the railway station
or at the airport
for my exchange term,
which gives you vacation.

so that I'll be fine and healthy, safe and sound
so that you'll be far so that I'll be well
isn't this why they call it a "farewell"?

and one day my head is no longer a self-adjusting hell,
since I'm no longer a substitute for something above.
I want to shout till I have no voice to confess non-stop. to be clear,

I would rather die at the gates of my mind than let you burn your hands
by touching its doorknob.
this might be why I smell of smoke all the time,
one does not need a lighter when one's scorched on the inside.



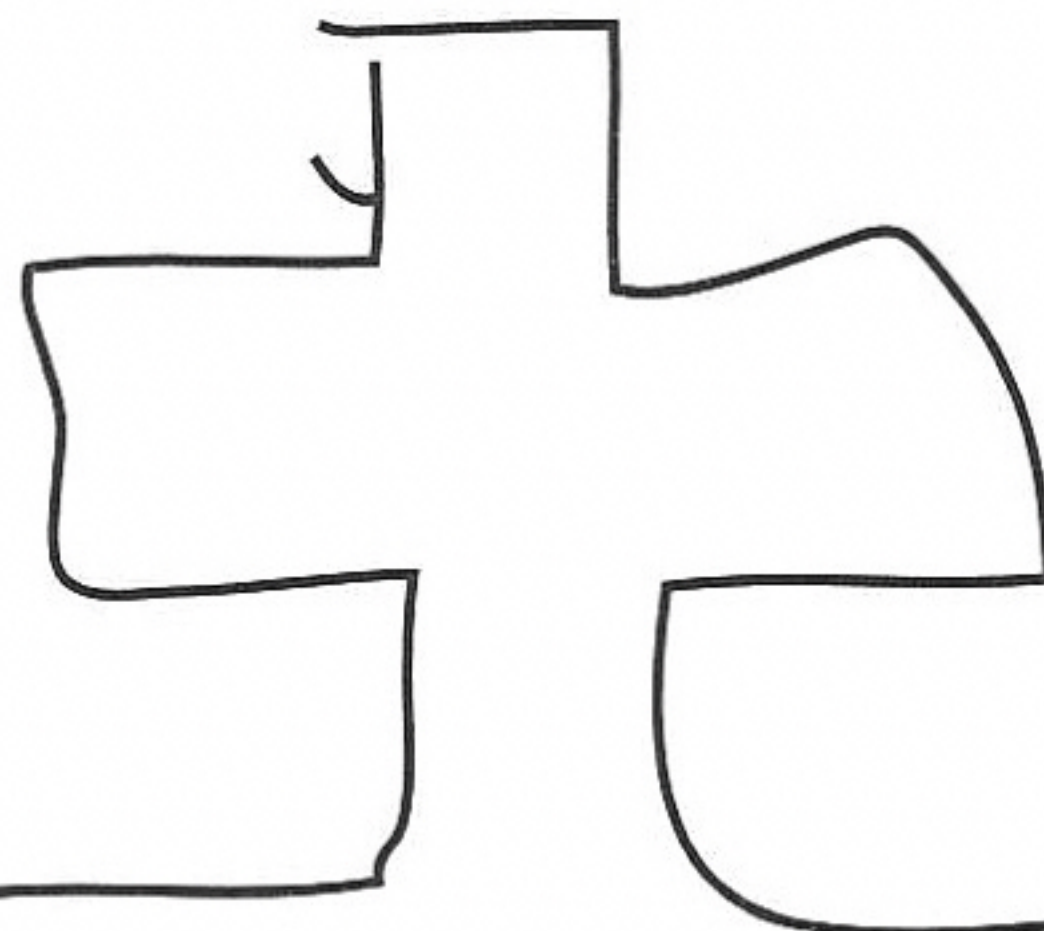
Anya Pertel

DEAD LIBS

Arizona/Peter
Greene/Day

1. *least favorite day of the week*
2. *adjective*
3. *go-to Durfee's swipe goods*
4. *past tense verb*
5. *some kind of vehicle*
6. *favorite color*
7. *your favorite Mitski song*
8. *favorite song from Konvicted by Akon*
9. *third grade teacher's name*
10. *your name*
11. *eternal resting place of choice*
12. *favorite sin (-ing)*
13. *religious group to which you do not belong*
14. *place of eternal damnation*
15. *flora or fauna of choice*
16. *filthy rich family surname*
17. *second least favorite vegetable*
18. *juiciest conspiracy theory*
19. *YES or NO*





It was _____ when you died. It was a _____ death.
(least favorite day of the week) (adjective)

Distracted by the _____ in your hands, you _____
(go-to Durfee's swipe goods) (past tense verb)

a little too gingerly across Elm St, paying no heed to the oncoming _____.
(some kind of vehicle)

You really aren't too surprised—this was bound to happen eventually.

As your vision fades to _____ you hear the distant sounds of _____.
(favorite color) (your favorite Mitski song)

The soft indie rock becomes contorted, like you've been slowly submerged underwater and

you're sinking and is that _____ you're hearing?
(favorite song from Konvicted by Akon)

Suddenly you find yourself in a classroom, in one of those miniature chairs that the assistant teacher sat in. _____ approaches you and says, "Welcome _____."
(your third grade teacher) (your name)

"Where am I?" you ask. "Is this _____?"
(eternal resting place of choice)

The teacher laughs. "Unfortunately, no. You partook in too much _____ for that. And it turns out the _____ had it right all along."
(favorite sin [-ing]) (religious group to which you do not belong)

"Are you telling me this is _____?!" you exclaim.
(place of eternal damnation)

"Well, not quite. We've decided to give you one last chance. You're going back to Earth, but this time as a _____."
(flora or fauna of choice)

"That sounds great and all, but do you think maybe I could go back as a _____?"
(filthy rich family surname)

"Well, the very fact that you're here means you have a soul so... no."

You take one last look around the classroom, which smells faintly of _____.
(second least favorite vegetable)

Your teacher leads you across the room and sits you down on one of those four wheel scooter things—in front of you a slide, descending through the clouds below.

"Wait! Teacher! Before I go, I have to know: is it true that _____?"
(juiciest conspiracy theory)

"..._____."
(YES or NO)

And with a gentle kick from your beloved teacher, you scoot, scoot, scoot away.

NEIGHBORS

Peter Nekrasov

It's been a couple months since Mark died and still nobody knows what happened. Some say heart attack, some say overdose. A few days ago I got a letter from Mark's former manager, saying he left me his old house on Middleham Road, and inside the envelope there was a key to the thing. I hadn't lived there since '85, so I hopped in the car and drove uptown.

I remember when Mark first moved into the house across the street. It was a small square box with an old rusty finish, and it seemed to sway in the breeze like a hologram. Ever since he got there, he seemed like he was trying to get away from something, some dark cloud called the Seventies. It ran deep—he was nearly broke, dropped out of university after a short time studying psychology, and ditched his old folks' flat in Fulham once he found a job nearby at some metalworks. Nobody knew much about him—he was a shifting presence, quiet yet unruly, always apt to deceive.

The only person I ever saw him with was his older brother Ed, who played in a few local bands and occasionally spun disco records at the Rio. Ed always brought him things: biscuits, records, newspapers. They listened to jazz, played football, laughed about Mark's new anarchist pogo band The Shits, a play on the same-town legends The Slits. At the time, punk rock was all the rage: everyone who listened to The Clash went out and bought a beat-up guitar at their local garage sale, Mark included. It was fun and so it tore him apart: punk rock was nothing but a reminder that the true thrill of music was gone, that everything was laid out in the open. While it gave him the confidence to play, it was a deep discomfort with the honest-to-god directness of it that led him to seek opacity, sell his guitar for a Wurlitzer, and start meditating long hours in the dark.

At night he was writing songs and recording demos at home. He would take breaks at a nearby pub or someplace rowdier, and I'd watch him return late in his old Ford Escort, suspension bouncing, tailpipe spitting sparks whenever it touched the ground. When I looked across the street, there was a light on in the master bedroom, and I could make out some vague figure moving behind the curtain. He felt similar to me—we were both withdrawn and obsessive over our work, the true work for which life seemed like a distraction.

When his new band got signed to EMI (same as Roxy Music, like he wanted) and put out a Top 40 hit, he flew the coop. He was recording in Highbury and touring Canada, and I didn't see him for years. No one moved in to replace him—his house just sat there, swirling with memories, full of ghosts. It was crowded in by trees, big and small. Some days they were festooned with insects, snails, seashells sticking to the leaves, waiting to be submerged in the flood. But they were eventually replaced with one sole tree whose dying branches formed a globe. Different birds gravitated towards the tree, sitting in the shapes of various continents, chirping restlessly, keeping vigil.

When I got there, there was a light on in my old house. I didn't bother checking in, and instead I walked up the path to Mark's house. When I put my hand on the door, I thought everything might spill out. I felt weightless as I walked in; his house had acquired the air of discarded objects. On the dining room table there were papers and endless clutter. I spent the afternoon going through it all: reminders (*Meeting with Keith, 14/4/88*), scraps of lyrics (*Place my chair at the backroom door / Help me up / I can't wait anymore*), addresses, receipts, phone numbers, misremembered quotations, mail orders, deposit slips, diatonic scales. There was a page ripped out of some book, tucked in the case of an unlabeled cassette. On the top of the paper he had scribbled MYRRHMAN in black marker. It read:

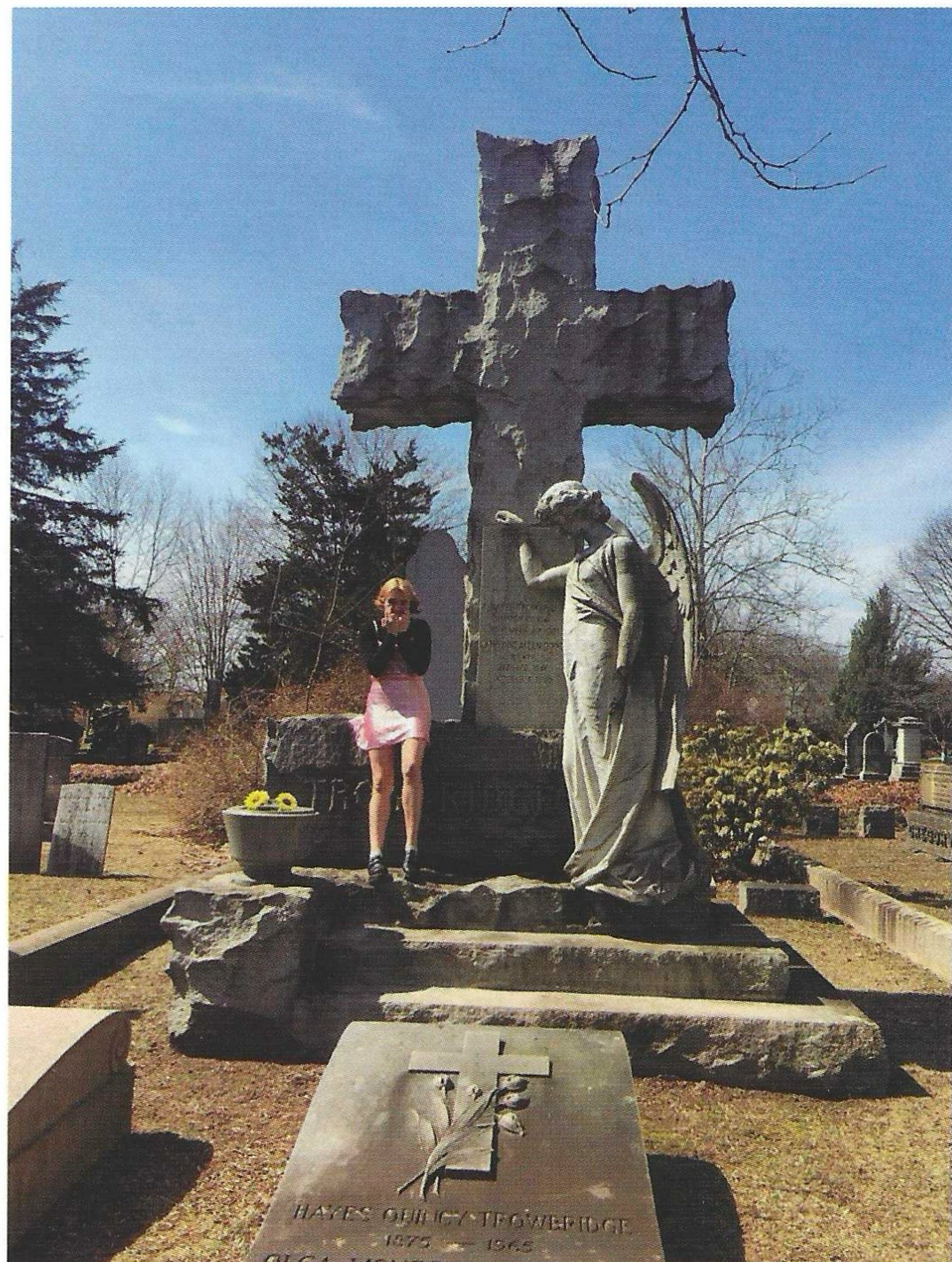
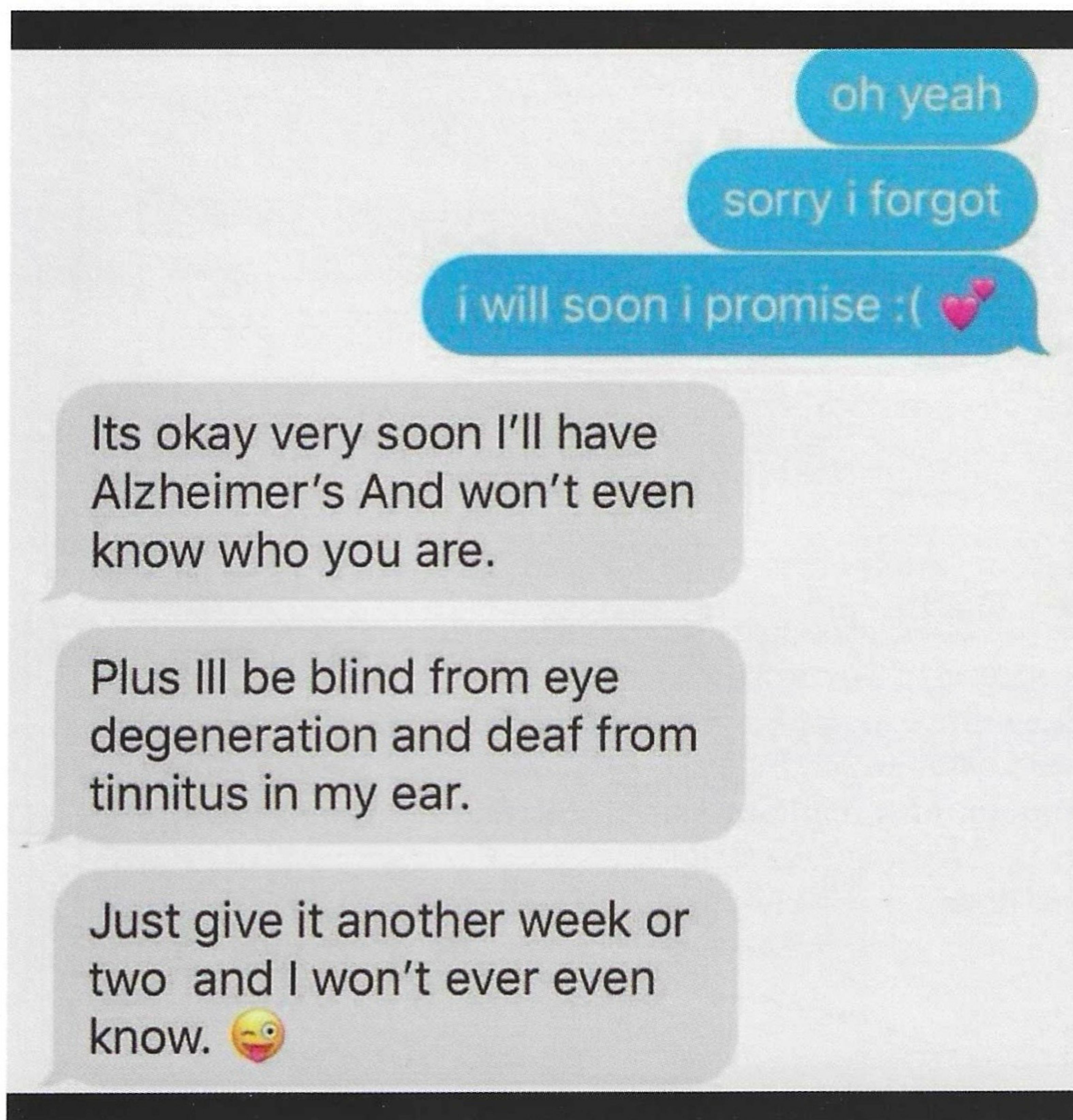
At the station there's a lonely traveler, waiting for the midnight train. It's been a while since he got there—he checks the station clock—and he's still waiting. His thighs are getting sore and his stomach is beginning to grumble. He fumbles around in the pockets of his sweatpants, a few nickels in loose change, hopefully enough for the fare. He doesn't know where he's going, but he knows he is chasing the image of someone who has been forgotten.

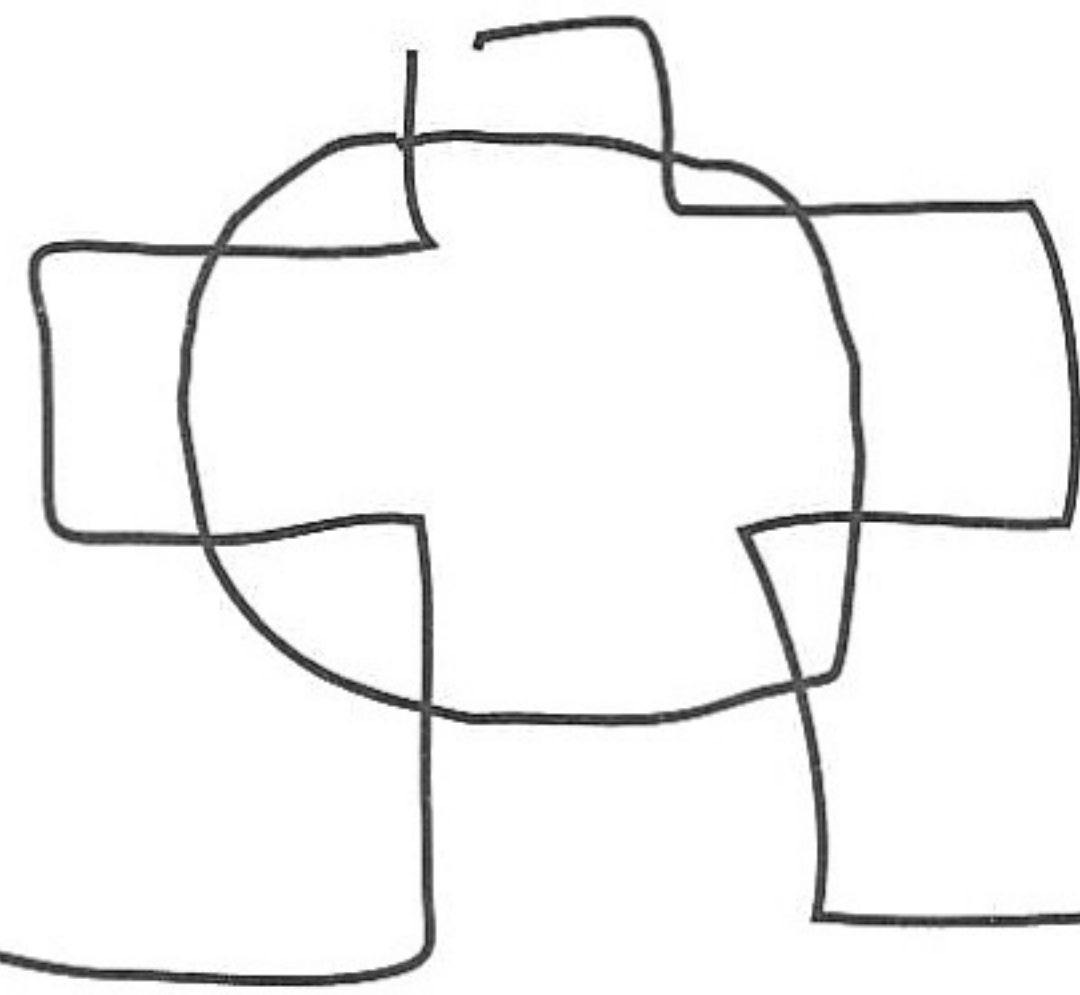
Somewhere far off the train is hissing in the night, cloud of smoke trailing. He's listening for the echo but it's dead air. He refuses to look into the camera. And then comes a chirping like a cricket, humming at the frequency of earth, or maybe a dolphin. It's been a while since I've seen one of those, he thinks, maybe decades. He is only at the beginning of a long journey that will take him into the sun.

He is unsure of what the train will bring. A somber melody, a wailing chord? or perhaps the final deliverance which will allow him to breathe.

The page ends. Somehow it made sense to open with death, greet it and get it out of the way. It was an ending marking a beginning. In retrospect, his later work was how I had always imagined him—sparse, stark, and insular. His last was a record that anticipated the tearing down of structures, the disbanding of his sole project, and his disappearance into oblivion. He loved music, however privately, and channeled this love in obscure ways, sometimes taking a step back and simply allowing emotion to delight in itself. Mark was a man of deep uncertainty and introspection, a memory that continually refuses to be forgotten.

Caramia Putman





VAMOS PA' LA PLAYA

Alice Oh

We went to the beach every single day while we were in Puerto Rico—a “true” spring break experience, one might say. The beach was all any of us could think about when we landed in San Juan and felt its sticky warmth, shed our New England clothing at our cheap Airbnb, and smelled the salty breeze while eating overpriced tacos on an outdoor restaurant patio. It was past ten, at least, by the time we ended up at the beach that first night, but finally: we were here.

Before we even put our towels down, Agnes stripped off her dress and ran towards the water. The rest of us watched silently from behind as she dove in—a moment of cinematic magnitude, her loose curls whipping in the wind, she could’ve been a brave-faced, sad-eyed, vaguely beautiful woman floating in the water in full embrace of her fate, whatever it may be. A wave crashed over her head, and then she was gone. For a moment, I imagined she’d been swept away, unable to tell land from sky in the blackness of the night or, even if she could, unable to fight the lunar strength of the tides. But she re-emerged a second later, blacker hair slicked straight against her scalp.

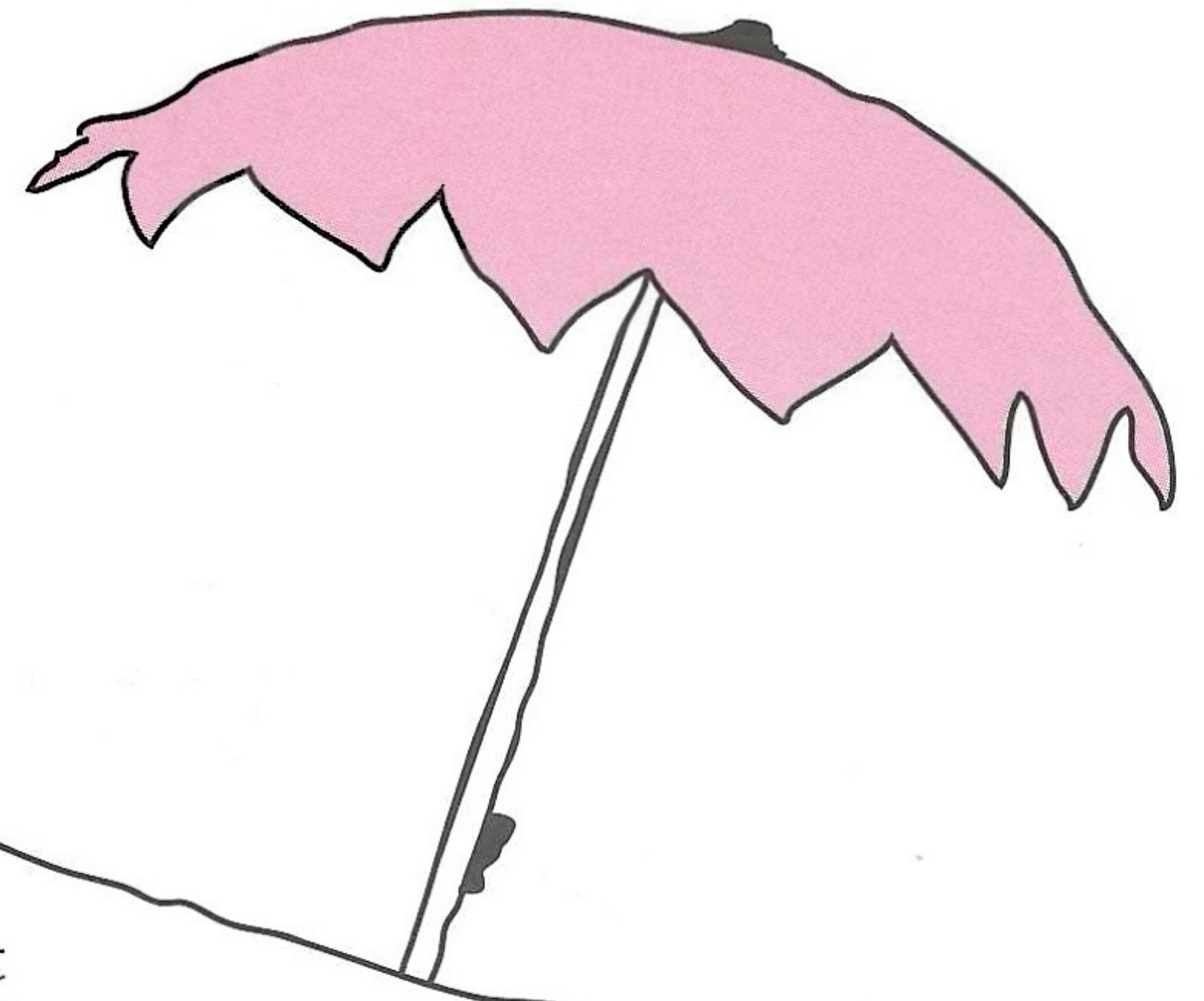
These were the biggest and loudest waves I’d ever seen, curling higher and higher towards the moon before crashing down to earth, thunderous. In all honesty, the ocean was frightening. It was upset and aggrieved and demanded retribution—but even more than that, it was endless. The water lapped against both shore and sky so seamlessly it all felt like one vast, nebulous entity. In comparison, I was so small. I wanted to jump in after Agnes, but I couldn’t let go of the fear that I’d be unlucky, that I’d be the one swept away, poor Asian American girl, what a tragedy, yet another spring break accident.

As I tried to shake off the foreboding, I was reminded of the last time I’d gone to the beach, only a few weeks prior back in New Haven. Lucy and Joe had found a way to receive funding from Slifka to host a Shabbat dinner, and in the post-homecooked-meal haze, someone offhandedly remarked we should go to the beach. Something smooth, soft, but still a little bumpin’—Ravyn Lenae probably, maybe Jorja Smith—played in the background, lulling us into various stages of lounge across Lucy’s living room. A murmur rippled through the room in passive appreciation of the idea that became a plan when Kat shook her car keys: “Let’s go!”

I didn’t really want to move; my body felt loose and heavy at the same time, brimming with challah and red wine. But seven of us piled into her Acura, then piled back out onto a sandy playground. It was so empty. The playground equipment was painted a shade of pink-purple uncommon on most playgrounds that, in the sun, I’d imagine looked fun and welcoming to eager children and their tired parents.

But against the flat, starless sky, the scene carried the same lonely eeriness as many of Dali’s surreal landscapes. As Kat pushed Joe on the swings, Lucy whispered to me that this playground had been built as a Sandy Hook memorial. Goosebumps.

This surreal feeling, that things were not quite what they seemed to be, continued as we headed towards the water. The tides were so low, the water had retreated so far, we just kept walking and walking into the wind. I lagged behind everyone else, uncommitted to the cause of seeing the water—it was dark, what was there to see?—but my sneakers stuck and slapped wetly against the damp sand, and I sped up at the impossible thought of quicksand.



Finally, we reached the edge of the water, and I looked back over my shoulder. I couldn't make out where we had parked the car, but I realized we had walked out onto a sand bar of sorts, surrounded on three sides by quietly rippling water. Lucy noticed, too, and imagined aloud but to no one in particular, *What if the water just closed in behind us?* I responded glibly, *I guess we'd get wet*, but the thought had crossed my mind as well, and once entertained, it was hard to shake off. A few minutes later, Lucy said as nonchalantly as possible, *It's getting late, we should head back soon*. I quickly agreed.

Eventually, I ended up knee-deep in the rough San Juan waters. It couldn't make up its mind, tugging me into its embrace one moment, only to push me away a minute later and spit me back out onto shore. I toed the line, too, wanting to be as carefree as Agnes but wanting even more to ensure my safety, too careful to take the risk. Lucy wasn't with me this time. With no one else there to affirm my sanity, or else to experience the same insanity, the same haunting of improbable scenarios, I wondered if I was just being unreasonably unfun, a prissy party-pooping scaredy-cat. I knew Agnes had been scared, too—she admitted it to me later—but sometimes she did things precisely because she knew they were dangerous and she wanted to be able to act as impulsively as boys could. We complained often in frustration, bordering sometimes on admiration, even envy, about boys who so carelessly show off fancy skateboarding tricks and so thoughtlessly dive after balls, unblinking in the face of potential scraped knees and chipped teeth—probably because the thought doesn't even occur to them. There is no fear to register.

On maybe the third day while we were in San Juan, we encountered “Calma (Remix)” by Pedro Capó and Farruko. The chorus begins, “Vamos pa' la playa,” and with our various levels of Spanish-speaking capabilities, it was the one line we all recognized simultaneously. “That's us!” I shouted. “We're at the beach!” It quickly became our favorite, and from then on we were blasting it on our phones in glass bowls, spontaneously breaking out into shitty a capella as we wandered through the streets, and asking our Uber drivers to turn the stereo up whenever it came on the radio. It was a *bop*.

But also—“You know, this song is kind of sad,” Rayan observed around the third or fourth time we listened to the song. “Right after *vamos pa' la playa*, he says, *pa' curarte el alma*. Let's go to the beach / to cure your soul. The fact that their souls need curing, that's really sad.”

Agnes let out a long “mmm” of appreciation, the kind you do at spoken word shows, and I half-expected her to start snapping. The conversation moved onto other songs that, beyond first impressions, were actually quite sad: “I Took a Pill in Ibiza,” Joe said, and “Like, every song by The Chainsmokers,” Agnes added. Underlying all of these songs was the crushing knowledge that no matter what they did, they would maybe never find what they were looking for.

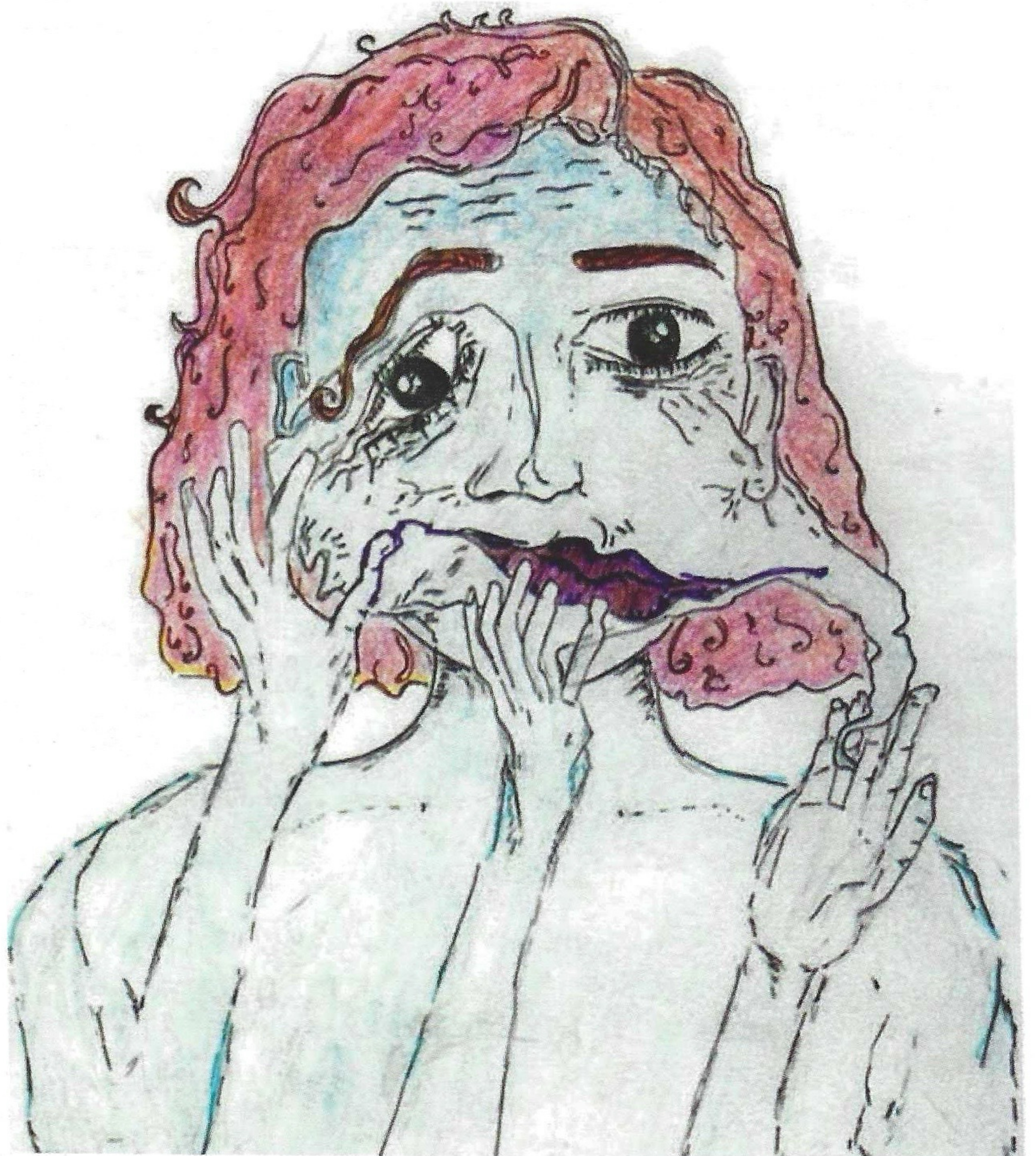
We all agreed that the song was sad, and yet we kept listening to it. I don't know why everyone else did, but at first listen, “Calma” for me was *yes*, effortless summer, everything I thought I wanted from spring break, *cierra la pantalla / abre la Medalla*—turn off the screen / crack open a Medalla. I became hooked on hope and wishful thinking and the idea of ice-cold Medallas, a Puerto Rican brand of delicious, cheap—or maybe just deliciously cheap—beer. Was Capó describing a real experience or pining after one? *Calma, mi vida, con calma*, he croons repeatedly. *Relax, calm down*. Ostensibly, he's singing to his lover: *Que nada hace falta si estamos juntitos bailando*, nothing is missing if we're dancing together. But *calma*, he commands again, and I question who he's talking to.

This spring break, you know, was really weird for me.

I think by weird, I mean mostly sad; there was a part of me that really wished the entire time that my best friend Kiana could've been there with me, or that I could've been with her. Kiana had planned to join us, but her grandmother was hospitalized two weeks before spring break came around. She flew out to Macau instead. Her grandmother passed away about a week later, a few days after Kiana's birthday and a few days before the rest of us arrived in San Juan. I felt weird about lying in the sun all day, about having fun, while she attended the funeral, rushed back to school to catch up on a week's work of missed classes, and grieved.

And it felt especially weird, and also very scary, thinking about the last time Kiana and I had made plans to travel together. We were supposed to visit San Francisco over winter break, but that time, I had been the one to cancel. Over Thanksgiving, I'd found out that my aunt had been diagnosed with breast cancer, and I was terrified of being too far away from the person who had raised me, terrified of spending money when there were potential medical costs we couldn't afford. I don't know what it means that our loved ones, both strong maternal figures in our lives, fell ill these past two breaks. Nothing, probably, except that we're getting older.

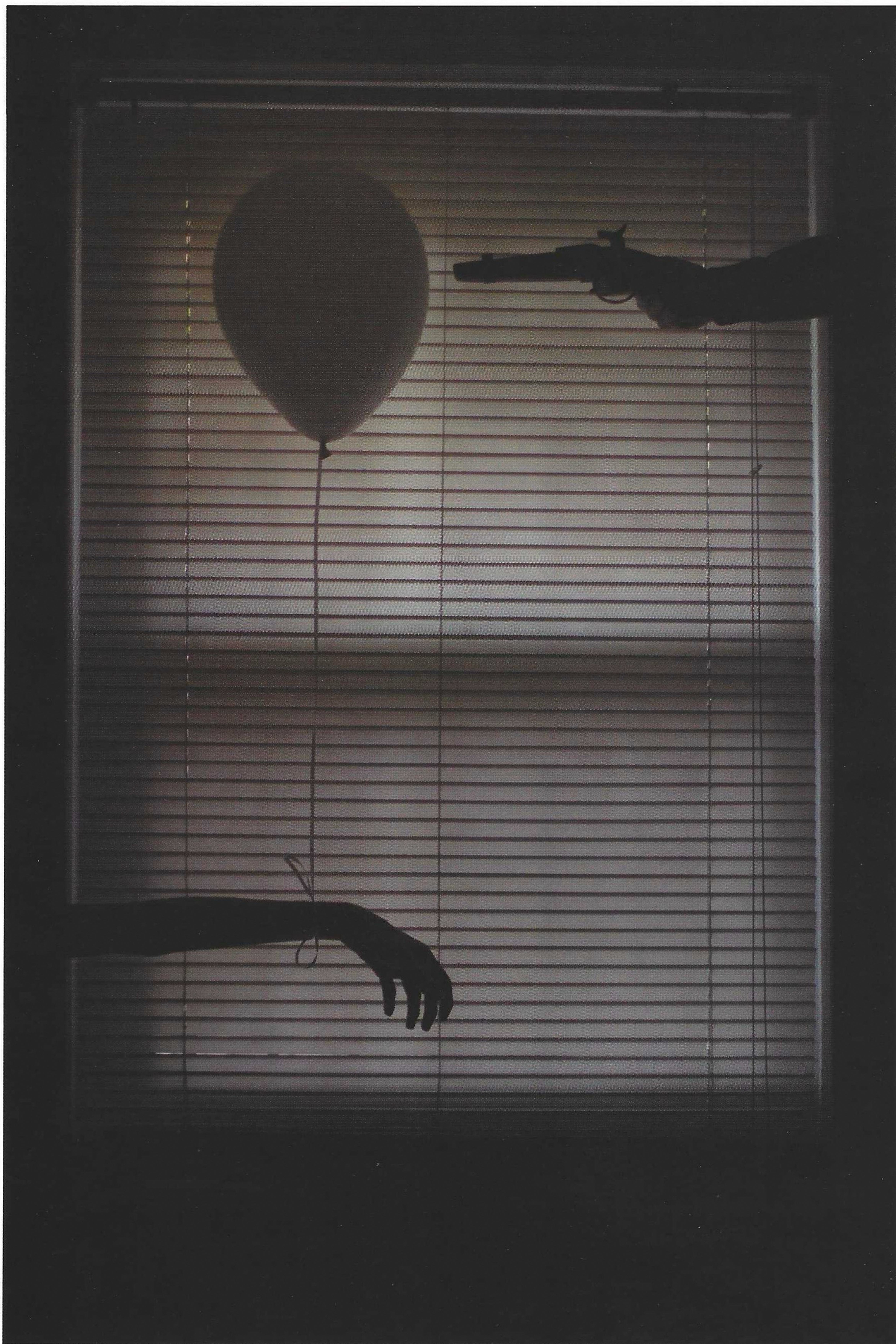
But also, it felt, everything. So the last two days we were in San Juan, I stopped going to the beach with everyone else. A party-pooper, definitely. Maybe Capó could cure his soul with some sun, but it would take me a little something more than *la playa y la Medalla*.



Kiddest Sinke

KILLJOY

Jack Adam



EVERYBODY TALKS ABOUT DEATH

Brittany Menjivar

As a reporter for pop culture website The Young Folks, I often interview bands—and bands often talk about death. Here are some of their perspectives for your perusal. —Britt

Garrett Russell of Silent Planet: If I meet somebody at a signing, I love it when I'm like, "Hey, how are you doing?", and instead of being like, "Oh, I'm great!", they're like, "Terrible. My wife just left me," or "My mom has cancer," or "I haven't been able to eat in three days."

Jessy Bergy of Story Untold: I had sleep paralysis last night. I was pretty much thinking that someone was choking me, so I woke up, punching the walls in the van. I have a bunch of sleep disorders. I sleepwalk and shit.

Ian Holubiak of The Worst Humans' iPhone notes:

"Nihilism and realism are two sides of the same coin. One gets you wasted; the other just wants to make a point."

"The emptiness of most things makes it hard to drown yourself in them."

"Given the current status of our social landscape, I'm afraid we'll all die from an earthquake very soon."

"Those who have died before me are the only ones who caught a real break."

"I've been calling weed ObamaCare because I'm unable to afford health insurance."

Drew Silverman of Shy Beast: The first song that I [arranged] with my first band was called "Grinning Skull on the Mantle."

David Tenczar of Shy Beast: Can a skull not grin? I feel like any skull is gonna be grinning.

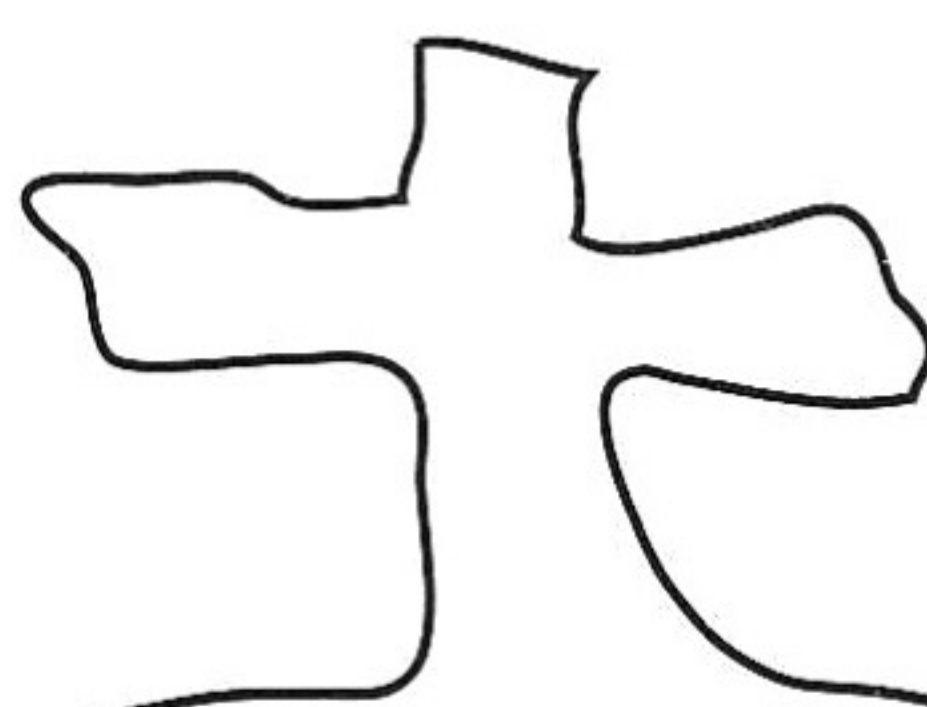
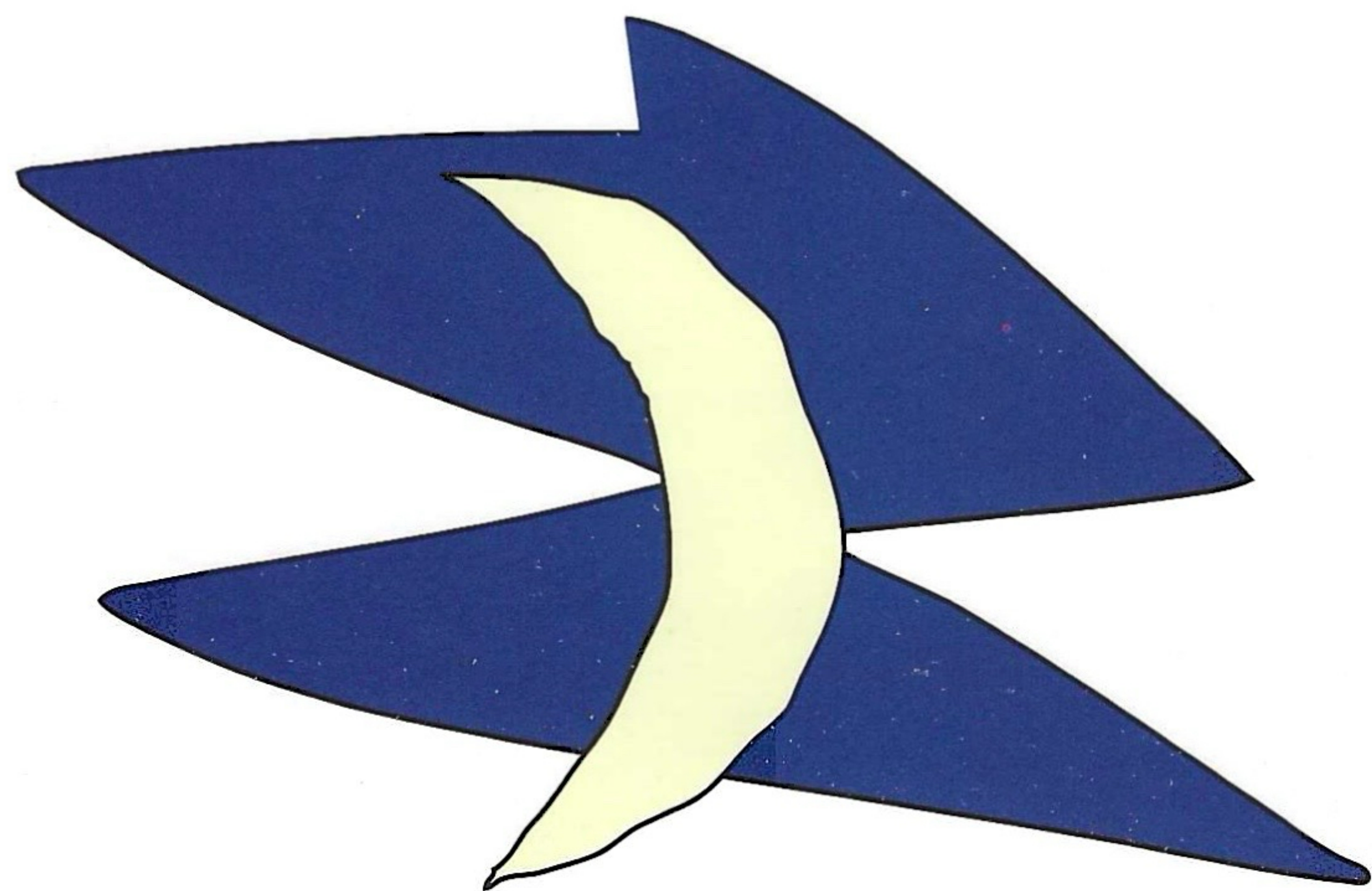
Antiboy: I really connect with [Sylvia Plath's] *Fever 103*, which is a poem challenging that we only become real after death. I actually have "too pure" and "for you" tattooed on my outer and inner thigh, respectively, on my right leg, from the line "I am too pure for you or anyone, your body hurts me like the world hurts God." I think it's one of her many beautiful and haunting depictions of the utter madness she experienced as a tortured soul on this Earth before she took her own life. It inspired a musical I wrote called "Too Pure," also.

Andy Gill of Gang of Four: I think one of my favorite films is a film from the '40s called with David Niven in it. It's called *A Matter of Life and Death*. It's this weird, surreal sort of fantasy. David Niven plays a British fighter pilot during the war, and he's flying, and he's been hit by enemy aircraft stuff. And the plane he's in, it's catching fire and it's coming down, and he's talking to the radio operator on the ground, and they fall in love in the last minutes. And then he crashes. And suddenly, this guy who's dressed in a 17th century French outfit appears and says to David Niven, who's lying on the beach, "Excuse me, but you have to come with me to heaven." And he goes, "What are you talking about?" And he says, "You are dead. Come with me to heaven." And they go off to heaven and everybody who's ever died is here in this court room. And they have to judge whether he can live or die, 'cause he's borderline. And somehow the radio operator gets involved, and they are operating on his body in real life. And then there's a staircase, which is the "Stairway to Heaven," which Led Zeppelin wrote about.

Sean Bonnette of AJJ: My buddy John Martin's rabbit that he had when he was a kid got eaten by meat bees.

Will Gould of Creeper: We were doing karaoke with Neck Deep in Savannah upstairs [at a karaoke bar]... And downstairs, there was a drive-by shooting, so we had to hide behind the bar.

John Floreani of Trophy Eyes: In the midst of partying... I found myself in this mental state where I was like, "I don't really wanna be here anymore. I'm just tired of waking up." Depressed. So I was sitting in the car with my friend one day, and I was telling him... and he thought, *Maybe if I speed at the fence at the top of this hill in the car, that'll scare it out of him.* And it kind of did. He sped at the fence. I was like, "Ah, fuck!", and he slammed on the brakes, and he was like, "Don't say that if you don't actually mean it." I was like, "Well, I guess that's true." I didn't know I felt that way.



Nick Ventimiglia of Grayscale: My grandma passed away, so I have this big candle on my leg that says "The flame is gone; the fire remains."
That's actually lyrics from a band called The Dear Hunter.

Keith Murray of We Are Scientists: Maybe four or five years ago, I got really into this documentary that's on YouTube. It's called "The Winged Beatle," and it explores the pretty rote and rudimentary and hackneyed conspiracy theory that Paul McCartney died midway through the Beatles' career and was replaced by a stand-in. I'm not really that interested in that theory, but the documentary itself is so harebrained. It's very odd and kind of poorly made, so that's incredibly gripping and entertaining. But at the very end, it ends with a cliffhanger. Like, it literally makes a declarative statement either way about the Paul McCartney thing. And to be honest, I don't even remember whether they had decided that it was or was not Paul McCartney. I just remember that it ends with a freeze frame of... I think, like, a briefcase being thrown and the question "Or was he?" It threatened that there was going to be a Part II, but there never, as far as I know, was a Part II. So my conspiracy theory is that the Beatles people killed this documentary filmmaker. That's a conspiracy I'm beginning right now.

Luke Spiller of The Struts: [If I could be any fictional character], I would be the bloke who crash-lands on the island of Wonder Woman. I'd be her boyfriend. What a great life that would be—to know her and then forever be held in her heart so she could never move on.

Adam Slack of The Struts: But you'd be dead.

Luke Spiller of The Struts: Yeah, I know. But in the spirit realm, you'd be like, "Yes. She's still into me."

Jon Fratelli of The Fratellis: You have no way of knowing what bliss is unless you experience the opposite of bliss. Can you imagine a life that was just 24 hours a day, seven days a week, total bliss? No; that would be particularly dull. We all think we want that, but we don't really want that. We would be so bored. And heartbreak is the opposite of bliss, so it's something to dive into the middle of and be curious about rather than to run away from.

To my surprise, Dead Can Dance did not talk about death.

ELEGY FOR BELL

Laurie Roark

They slipped him into a coffin
like you slip a loaf of
white bread back into its clear film bag
with a yellow *Fresh!* label,
thoughtlessly letting it dangle
toward the earth and spin closed
before tucking the end underneath,
sealing the food by its own weight.
The body presses on the counter.

His body was waiting to die,
fueled on packs of Marlboros
and cans of Natural Light that make
footing and fingers too unsteady to strum a guitar
anymore, voice too shaky for another
Hank Williams, Sr. refrain. But, *Lord, have mercy*, he would say
till the end, always a good Catholic,
embraced by the flesh and blood in his plastic coffin.

The priest at the funeral could not shake
the scent of embalming fluid mixed with
Benediction incense, and the guests smiled
at the body's blushed cheeks paired with bolo tie
and boots, freshly polished to enter the soil
of St. Joseph's Cemetery.

She can't remember what colors they chose
for the flowers or what hymns they asked the choir
to sing or how many miles they drove
in that procession through pine trees
past the towns of Pelican and Pleasant Hill and Robeline
and all of the Louisiana smallness. She remembers, instead,
the surprising lightness of his six-foot-three
body, light by the cold handle of the casket
she carried down the aisle to the altar.
To be blessed and sprinkled by Holy Water,
this is ending and this is remembering.



Aliaksandra Tucha

